

## **Natural Resources Abstract: Wild About the Outdoors**

### **Scope and content of the program:**

The Wild About the Outdoors camping program was initially crafted to ignite a love for the outdoors among young participants. Designed by two agents with backgrounds in agriculture and natural resources, the program is especially pertinent in Florida, where water is a vital concern across ecosystems. Camp activities encompass soil and water science, wildlife exploration, orienteering, and outdoor excursions. Geared towards youth aged 8-13, this age group is chosen for its inherent curiosity and receptiveness. The program aims not only to deepen their understanding of these subjects but also to instigate behavioral shifts towards preservation, sustainable practices, and conservation advocacy. Participants engage in diverse field experiences including kayaking on the river, fishing in University ponds, dip netting in fresh water ponds for invertebrates, learning to read and follow maps to find different points, navigate their way around the wilderness, build shelter and fires, leave no trace on hiking programs, identify native and invasive wildlife, learn which agencies to report wildlife sightings to, how to engage with citizen science projects in their communities, participate in conservation activities like building shelters for wildlife and restoring coastlines, catch and identify insects, build soil layers to learn about runoff and soil varieties, explore the aquifer and learn how it works in Florida, and have the opportunity to engage with expert speakers who meet with our group from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Land Trust and other advocacy groups, Soil and Water Board members, agriculturalists, state park rangers, University faculty members, and other environmental educators. By week's end, youth depart with newfound skills, a profound appreciation for nature, and the capacity to champion responsible land use and preservation.

**Number of people reached by the program:** This program has been taught in 4 counties to 194 individuals.

### **Collaborative efforts with natural resources agencies/organizations.**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission  
Nature Coast Biological Station- Sea Grant State Agents  
UF Fisheries Department  
Otter Springs rangers & Hart Springs department head  
Santa Fe Zoo  
Local agriculturalists  
The Nature Center at Omni Amelia Island Plantation  
Itchnutucknee Springs Department Head  
Alachua Land Trust  
Gilchrist Soil and Water Board  
Florida Forestry Service  
Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park

Florida Friends of the Springs  
Wild Bill's Alligator Tours  
Lubee Bat Conservatory  
North Florida Falconry  
Florida Farm Bureau  
Florida Department of Agriculture- Soil and water sciences

**Educational value and the significance of the effort on the environment:**

Objectives:

- Knowledge gain in a variety of natural resources topics as documented by pre and post surveys
- Develop life skills in science communication as evidenced by observation in discussion topics during camp
- Increase resiliency, teamwork, communication, and self confidence through annual 2 person team kayaking trips

Utilization of multiple teaching methods: lecture, small groups, guest speakers, field trips.

Complimentary Activities: crafts, games, books, public speaking, videos, etc.

**Impact of the educational program on the community and or 4-H program:**

Pre/ Post Camp Questionnaire was distributed, observational analysis was conducted.

96% reported increased science communication skills

100% increased their score on the post evaluation for natural resources knowledge gain

100% of youth reported increased safety knowledge, confidence, and teamwork life skills as reported in the post camp assessment

Youth increased natural resources awareness and conservation efforts by learning about leave no trace trips.

Youth learned to identify native species of plants, trees, and animals. They also engaged with industry professionals and increased their knowledge about ecosystems and land management.

7 youth who attended camp have since reported selecting college majors or pursuing careers post high school graduation in the major areas of fisheries, wildlife, soil science, agriculture, and forestry.

**Involvement of adult and teen volunteers and other youth (if applicable) in key leadership roles:**

Intermediate/Senior 4-H youth volunteers – assisted with activities by working directly with participants, mentored participants, and served to demonstrate when needed.

Return campers led orienteering and served as team leaders in the team kayaking adventures each year. Youth volunteers also helped younger youth as group leaders on field trips, they led activities like land management/ecosystems creation, small space games, and identifying species.

Adult volunteers – Educated children during activities in the field and within the classroom, lifeguarded on water trips, chaperoned and helped foster an environment of belonging for youth to feel safe and be engaged. This camp is extremely hands on and quite a bit of time is spent on outdoor activities that require close safety instruction and small group teaching/ observation.





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1. Orienteering challenge
2. Visiting Santa Fe Zoo and doing a keeper talk to learn about the animals
3. Casting animal tracks with plaster after learning to identify various animal prints
4. FWC presenting about their monitoring work with deer, panthers and other native wildlife at the water discharge site
5. Learning about and making soil profiles, then testing the time it takes to filter water and how well different soil substrates do
6. Learning about snake sheds
7. Touching an invasive monitor lizard and learning about ecosystem threats and damage

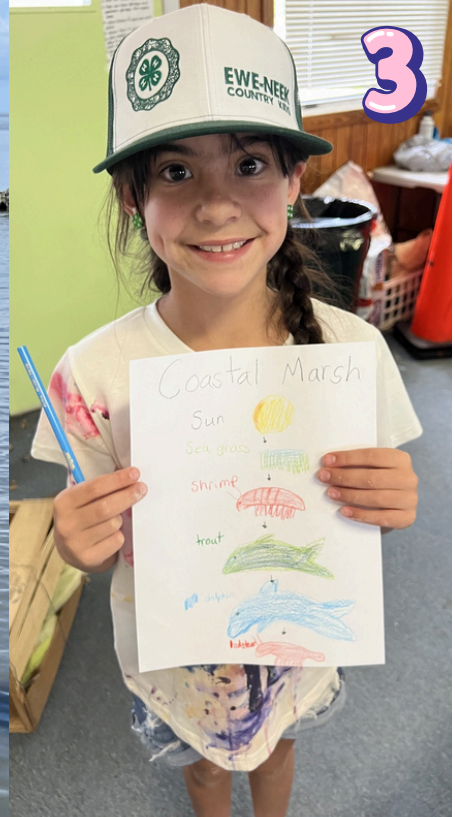




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# Wild About the Outdoors

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**JULY 10-12**

**AGES 8-13**

**COST IS \$65**

A 3 day camp focused on soil and water science, native and invasive wildlife, and orienteering where youth will explore the outdoors and gain a further appreciation for natural resources.

To register or for questions please call (352) 463-3174

1. Fishing at the university fresh water research center after learning how to identify native fish.
2. Exploring Cedar Key oyster beds and learning about coastal erosion research
3. Drawing food chains and learning about webs and ecosystems
4. Observing a young alligator on a pad on the Rainbow River during a kayak trip ispy game
5. Dip netting for invertebrates
6. The promotional flyer used to advertise this 4-H program





1. Dip netting and learning to identify invertebrates in the field
2. Taking a closer look at field specimens caught during dip netting, then learning about their impact on the ecosystem.
3. Kayak clean up trip removing trash from the Suwannee River with the Trust
4. Taking an air boat tour to see alligators and help with a population study monitoring alligator movement in the Withlacoochee River
5. Team kayaking and practicing resilience and teamwork while building self confidence and communication life skills on the Chassahowitzka River/ tributary area.